



United States Department of Agriculture

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland

Hahns Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District
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News Release

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New information sought regarding Mad Rabbit Trails Project preliminary proposal

(STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, Colo.) July 16, 2019 – The Hahns Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District, Routt National Forest, is seeking new information on a preliminary proposal for the Mad Rabbit Trails Project. An updated collection of trail-based options is now available for feedback. Three previous proposals for a Mad Rabbit Trails Project have been presented to the public.

Originally, the Mad Rabbit Project was proposed to provide trail-based recreation opportunities, as well as to protect forest resources by reducing user-created trails. Over the past year, planning and public input processes have established more broadly the importance for conservation of natural resources and consideration of social concerns regarding the impact of Mad Rabbit.

“The preliminary proposed action represents a collaborative effort to incorporate multiple viewpoints surrounding the Mad Rabbit project,” said Hahns Peak/Bears Ears District Ranger Tara Umphries. “In addition, the proposal attempts to achieve a balance between providing public recreation opportunities, while addressing management concerns and resource issues. The District is committed to working alongside our partners, cooperators, and stakeholders, as we build relationships to deliver on shared goals.”

This preliminary proposal includes approximately 50 miles of new trails, associated trailhead improvements, and additional management actions that would provide opportunities for a variety of users, both in terms of skill levels and types of use. Several of the proposed trails would occur along the Highway 40 corridor, creating both short and longer trail opportunities for varying abilities and uses, with connections to the Buffalo Pass area.

To protect resources and improve wildlife habitat, approximately 20 miles of user-created routes, mostly near Rocky Peak and Strawberry Park Hot Springs, would be rehabilitated to a natural state. Limiting further adverse impacts to this area, which already has appreciable traffic on county roads, was a topic of consensus during the roundtable discussions. Curbing trail development in this area would be consistent with the existing management area direction in the Routt Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), as well as supporting previous and current actions aimed at conserving wildlife and associated habitat in the area (e.g., wildlife habitat improvements as a part of the Steamboat Front project).

Suggestions for a high-density trail system between the West Rabbit Ears Summit and Ferndale are not included in the proposal because it would not be fully consistent with the LRMP, Forest Service trail standards, and retention of the roadless character of the area.

The development of this proposal is funded in part by the City of Steamboat Springs 2A accommodation tax.

The Forest Service would like to thank all stakeholders who have contributed to the development of the Mad Rabbit proposal thus far and encourage them to provide any new information on this preliminary proposal. Input will inform the development of a proposal to be analyzed for environmental effects.

Feedback is most useful if concisely stated, directly related to the project, and includes supporting reasons for suggestions. Input would be most helpful in development of the proposal if received by Aug. 15, 2019. Additionally, an official comment period will occur during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

The preliminary proposal and supporting documents can be reviewed at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50917>

Please submit public input via email or postal mail:

comments-rm-medicine-bow-routt-hahns-peak-bears-ears@fs.fed.us with "Mad Rabbit Trails Project" in the subject line, or

Hahns Peak-Bears Ears Ranger District
Attn: Mad Rabbit Trails Project
925 Weiss Drive
Steamboat Springs, CO 80487

For this project, compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) are being conducted concurrently. In order to better involve the public in the NHPA process, NEPA scoping letters and public legal notices which invite public comment as a part of the NEPA process also serve to notify and invite public comment on the proposal as stipulated by NHPA.

A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Mad Rabbit Trails Project is anticipated to be released in the early spring of 2020. The next iteration of the proposed action will be presented in that document.

For additional information contact project lead or district ranger at (970) 870-2299.

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